

OBSERVATIONS

ON A

1608/2861.

PAMPHLET,

INTITLED,

AN

ESSAY

ON

NATIONAL COVENANTING.

By WILLIAM MONCRIEFF,

Minister of the Gospel at ALLOA.

DEUT. vi. 13, and x. 20. *Thou—shalt swear by his name.*

MAT. v. 33. *Thou—shalt perform unto the Lord thine oaths.*

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PAMPHLET, intitled, *An Essay on National Covenanting.*

THERE has been, for some time past, an uncommon opposition manifested to our covenants and covenanting work, by persons of various denominations as to their religious profession. This opposition, so keenly managed, makes it necessary that something should be said in defence of the solemn covenants these lands are under to the most high God; and in defence of the duty of covenanting itself,—to shew that it is moral, and so an exercise warranted and called for in New Testament times.

Covenanting is properly of the nature of a vow, or promissory oath; whereby we bind ourselves to necessary duty, both as to our profession and practice, Conf. chap. xxii. and it consists in a person or people renouncing the holding of the covenant of works, taking hold by faith of God's covenant of promise, and in the faith thereof devoting themselves to the Lord in a covenant of duty; engaging with the solemnity of an oath, in the strength of promised grace, to cleave to the truths and cause of Christ, and to walk in his statutes, to keep his judgments and do them. The nature of this duty is opened up and explained in a course of Sermons from Isa. xix. 18. 21. by the Rev. Mr. Alexander Moncrieff, late Minister of the Gospel at Abernethy, long since published to the world; which the reader, if he pleases, may consult.

There has lately come forth a pamphlet, intitled, *An Essay on National Covenanting*; wherein the Author vents very strange notions about this duty: What is proposed, is only to make a few observations on this performance, through divine assistance; that so something may be done to keep unthinking people from being deceived.

Whoever the Author be, he seems to be possessed of no small share of self-confidence. He says in his introduction, page 3. "It appears to me, that they" (*viz.* who have wrote upon covenanting, on both sides) "have not rightly understood the true nature of national covenanting, nor hit upon the proper source of argument for the establishment of their respective hypotheses. Till we make ourselves masters of our subject, we cannot be supposed to manage it in a proper manner, &c." The native import of such an introduction seems to be,—That never one understood the true nature of national covenanting, or was master of this subject, whatever they wrote about it, till this gentleman appeared. But, however high he stands in his own opinion, I believe, men of sense, that have any tolerable acquaintance with the subject, will have other thoughts concerning him, upon the very first reading of his Essay.

Page 4. After noticing, that both sides allow that national covenanting was a duty under the law,—he proceeds to observe, "That the Jewish covenanting consisted in giving, by some public visible signs, a declaration of adherence to the covenant which God made with the Jews at Sinai." This Author does not give us any particular account of his notion of the Sinai covenant; but it may be gathered from his performance, that he has the same notion of it with a late writer, the Rev. Mr. Smith at Newburn, in his *Compendious Account of the Form and Order of the Church of God, in the several great Periods thereof*, Printed at Edinburgh, 1765. In which pamphlet, by the bye, we have a very great novelty. After he has spued out all the venom he can, against national covenanting in New Testament times, he comes, page 86. to give us an example of himself and his flock entering into a formal covenant. If he and his congregation might enter into such an agreement, as he says they did; why may not every congregation, after acknowledging God by calling on his name, profess an agreement in the same manner, as to the principles of faith they agree in,—and enter into an engagement to the practice of duty? If congregations may, why may not a nation professing the Christian faith? seeing it is evident from scripture, as has been shewn by such divines as have wrote against Independency, that national churches



churches were to obtain under the New Testament. And as, without doubt, an oath is warranted in the New Testament in matters of moment, why may we not seal this our profession with our oath? and then we have all that we plead for.

The Essayist's notions, I say, of the Sinai covenant, seem to be the same with the author's of the *Compendious Account*, &c. which he declares, p. 21. 22. 23. 24. of his book. He considers the transaction at Sinai, which he says, is sometimes called the law, sometimes the covenant,—as only temporary, typical, and earthly: he affirms the blessing and the curse in it was entirely earthly; and that it did not bear any direct and immediate reference unto the views of another life, or heavenly state, p. 22. And upon this view of the Sinai covenant, he goes on to overthrow all national covenanting in New Testament times.

It is not my present undertaking, to deal particularly with that author. But, as a mistaken notion of the Sinai transaction, which some of the chief opposers of our covenants take for granted to be the true view of it, is so much improv'd against national covenanting in New Testament times; and by them laid as the foundation on which they build: it may not be improper to take some short view of it, as it is laid down to us in the scriptures.

The above account of the Sinai transaction, seems not a little to reflect upon its Author. Is it becoming the great God, in such a solemn manner, to transact with his people,—merely about temporal and earthly things? That the form of the service and worship of God instituted at Sinai was temporary, and in a manner earthly, compared with the more spiritual worship of the New Testament, to continue to the end of the world,—is acknowledged. That the ceremonial law had a shadow of good things to come, is likewise granted. And that there were promises of temporal blessings in that covenant, peculiarly suited to that state of minority, and consequently servile state, which the church was then in; yea further, that these were chiefly, and the promises of spiritual blessings and salvation more sparingly insisted on, under the legal dispensation; as also that threatenings of temporal evils did particularly obtain under that dispensation,—is not denied. But that temporal
blessings

blessings only were promised in the Sinai covenant or transaction, and temporal evils only threatened,—is an imagination that has not the least foundation to support it in the sacred writings, but is directly contrary thereto. That the transaction then at Sinai, in bulk, was temporary, typical and earthly,—is what, I presume, no man can prove; and in attempting to do so, there is something taken in hand to be proven to have been done by God, which is altogether unworthy of him. According to the scripture account of the Sinai transaction, it may be considered as consisting in the following things.

1st, The covenant of grace was delivered to Israel from mount Sinai, as appears from *Exod. xx. 1. God spake all these words, saying, I am the Lord thy God.* This was the sum of the covenant God made with Abraham long before; and the promise is here promulgated to Israel, to be the foundation of their faith. Was this only a promise of some temporal blessing? I am sure, our Saviour explains it otherways, *Matth. xxii. 32.* And in this view of the Sinai transaction, the moral law was there given as the law of Christ, or a rule of life to believers in the hand of a Mediator; and the covenant relation between God and them proposed, as the strongest obligation to obedience: as is taught in our Catechisms, from the word of God; and in agreeableness to them, by the Rev. Mr. Ebenezer Erskine, in a sermon intitled, *A Treasure of Gospel-grace digged out of Mount Sinai.* As also the ceremonial law, respecting the external worship of God in the Old Testament church; and the judicial law, which more especially respected their civil rights as they were a nation distinct from all others, which distinction behoved to be kept up till the Messiah should come;—were also given forth to them, as a part of their rule under that dispensation. No doubt, in the revelation of the covenant of grace made at Sinai, there was something peculiar to Israel, and the infant state of the church; as that transaction included the whole of the ceremonial law, or all those typical institutions and ordinances which belonged to the Mosaic oeconomy. But these all had evidently a respect to JESUS CHRIST the great antitype prefigured by them, and undoubtedly contained a more obscure and imperfect administration of the covenant of

of grace. These ceremonies have been called by some divines, The gospel of the fathers.

2dly, The covenant of works was also for special ends repeated and delivered to the Israelites from mount Sinai, as appears from Gal. iv. 24. and many other places of scripture; as also from the thunderings, lightnings, &c. that attended this transaction. But the covenant of works was not here repeated to the Israelites, that they might seek or expect life thereby; but to shew them the impossibility of dealing with God in the way of that covenant, and convince them of the necessity of a Mediator;—so to shut them up to the faith, or to an embracing of the covenant of grace then delivered to them. And in this view of the Sinai transaction, the ten commandments, or the moral law, was there delivered as the law of works,—requiring perfect obedience as the condition of life, and threatening damnation for every transgression. The reader may consult Mr. Boston's Note on the *Marrow*, p. 55. 56. 57. 58. of the 13th edition.

3dly, There was also at Sinai Israel's covenant of duty, as appears from Exod. xxiv. 3. 7. The people answered with one voice, *All that the Lord hath said, will we do.* And the Lord approves of their resolution and engagement, Deut. v. 28. No doubt, many among them entered into this engagement in a legal way; through the natural biases in their hearts to the covenant of works, and their mistaking the meaning of this transaction. But such as had faith among them, on this occasion did renounce the holding of the covenant of works, took hold of God's covenant of grace,—and in the strength of the grace promised in that covenant, devoted themselves to the Lord in a covenant of duty. As many commandments were given at Sinai to this people, that were to be binding only under the Old Testament dispensation, viz. these contained in the ceremonial law; and many commandments that respected them only as a nation, viz. these contained in the judicial law,—which are not binding on others, except in so far as any of them may some way coincide with moral precepts; so their covenant of duty, without doubt, did include an engagement to the obedience of these. But their engagement to obedience in any thing God required, was in its nature a moral duty; and

and they engaged to the obedience of the moral law, which is the perpetual rule of righteousness, as well as of these other laws.

Now, since the covenant of grace was promulgated at Sinai, the covenant of works was there repeated, (under which all mankind are, who have not been brought within the bond of the covenant of grace,) and Israel there entered into a covenant of duty to serve the Lord; it seems strange that any should represent that transaction in bulk, as merely temporary, typical and earthly. When the apostle opposes the Sinai-covenant, to what the Essayist calls the Zion-covenant, it will be found that no other opposition is intended,—than of the Sinai covenant as it had in it a repetition of the covenant of works, unto the covenant of grace; or of the Sinai covenant as it contained an obscure administration of the covenant of grace, unto that more clear and spiritual administration of the same covenant under the New Testament. The change of the administration, that obscure one under the law ceasing, and giving way to the more clear one under the gospel, is certainly what is pointed out, Jer. xxxi. 31.—34. and Heb. viii. If any will plead that more is intended in these scriptures, it will lead them into errors and absurdities that they are perhaps little aware of.—Let then the true nature of the Sinai transaction be attended to, and it will be found our adversaries have no foundation for their asserting, that covenanting ceased to be a duty, with the ceasing of the Mosaic oecconomy; which is the opinion of the above author of the *Compendious Account*, &c. But 'tis now time we return to our *Observations* on the *Essay*.

Page 5. He proceeds to consider, what kind of a duty national covenanting among the Jews was; and says, "Moral I think it can not have been." For this he gives several reasons. The first is, "Because moral duty is obligatory in all ages, and on all persons: but it is quite plain, that no such thing was done during the patriarchal age—the space of 2000 years." It might be a sufficient answer to this, to observe,—That this author's confident assertion amounts to no proof at all. But there is one place of scripture that makes much against this assertion, Gen. iv. 26. *Then began men to call upon the name of the Lord.*

Lord. Marg. To call themselves by the name of the Lord. When men came to be thus distinguished from those that were profane, by an open profession of the name of ~~the~~ Lord; it will be hard to prove they never made this profession in a way of religious covenanting, or bound themselves by oath to adhere thereto. It is but very little we have on record about the patriarchal age: but this, among the few things that are handed down to us, makes the matter far from being so plain, that there was no such thing; yea, gives ground to conclude, that in this way the worshippers of the true God were distinguished from the wicked and profane.

He further argues against the morality of this duty: "Nor during the law-scheme was this duty obligatory on the Heathen; or on any people but the Jews alone,—and these Gentiles who embraced the Jewish faith, or took hold of the Sinai covenant." This is strange reasoning. Above, in the same page, after observing that the Sinai covenant is dignified with the name of God's covenant,—it is asserted, that the covenants which were afterwards made by the Jews were what God calls taking hold of his covenant; and here, that this duty was obligatory on the Jews only, and these Gentiles that took hold of the Sinai covenant. The amount of these two passages compared, is just this,—That the duty of taking hold of the Sinai covenant, was obligatory on these Gentiles, and no other, who took hold of the Sinai covenant. I would ask our author, Was it the duty of the Heathen to embrace the Jewish faith? I presume he cannot deny this; for, if it was not, the practice of such as did so, cannot be freed of presumption. Now, if it was their duty to embrace the Jewish faith, and turn proselytes; then, having done so, according to this author's own reasoning, the duty of covenanting was obligatory on them. Moreover, Was not the moral law obligatory on the Heathen? This surely can never be denied; it will be hard then to prove, that it was not their duty to engage themselves by covenant to yield obedience to God's law.

His last argument against the morality of the duty is this, *viz.* "Our Saviour—never performed any such thing, which he behov'd certainly to have done, if it

“ had been a moral duty, otherwise he has not fulfilled
 “ all righteousness : yea, although he exhorted to the
 “ performance of every moral duty, yet he never men-
 “ tioned this in the catalogue.” To affirm our Saviour
 never performed any such thing as covenanting with God,
 is a very strange assertion. Did not Christ covenant with
 the Father, in the council of peace that was between them
 both ; when he said, *Lo, I come to do thy will, O my God ?*
 Did he not swear to the Lord, and vow to the mighty
 God of Jacob, Psal. cxxxii. 2. ? as well as the Father
 swore to him, Psal. lxxxix. 4. Surely a greater than Da-
 vid is here. Did he not express his adherence to this
 eternal engagement, when he came into the world, ac-
 cording to Heb. x. 5. 6. 7. ? But it will be said, this is
 what we are not to imitate him in ; as his engagement was
 to fulfil the law as a covenant of works, in the room of
 his people. We answer ; Though such an engagement
 is not required of us ; yet it cannot be said, that our Sa-
 viour never covenanted with God. Our covenanting is
 our engaging, in the strength of grace, to fulfil the law of
 Christ ; to obey the law as a rule of life, in the hand of
 a Mediator. Now, no argument can be drawn against our
 covenanting, because Christ never covenanted in this way ;
 for Christ was not made under the law as the law of Christ,
 or a rule of life in the hand of a Mediator,—but as a co-
 venant of works, that he might redeem them that were
 under the law. Before then this argument can stand its
 ground, that Christ never covenanted with God,—it must
 first be proven, that he did not covenant and engage to the
 Father, to fulfil the law as a covenant of works : And if
 it be still alledged, he never covenanted to fulfil it as a
 rule of life, divested of its covenant-form ; it must next
 be proven, that our Saviour was under the law as a rule
 of life, divested of its form as a covenant of works : none
 of which can ever be proven by the adversaries of cove-
 nanting work.

Perhaps the Essayist will say, that we mistake him in this ;
 for it is not covenanting in general, but national covenant-
 ing, which he denies our Saviour ever to have practised.
 All that needs to be said to this is, that our Saviour could
 not set before us an example of national covenanting, be-
 cause

cause the bulk of the nation rejected and despised him; but this will never prove, that a nation may not nationally profess an adherence to Christ and his cause by solemn covenant, where the Christian religion is received and embraced by the nation. Besides, it is to be remembered,—that when our Saviour was tabernacled in this lower world, the Jewish church and nation were speedily to be overthrown; and the New Testament church was not yet erected.—It may be farther observed here, that though our Saviour was no doubt a perfect pattern, yet there were duties incompetent for him to perform in his own person, which are binding upon us. It is our duty,—to repent of our wickedness,—to turn from sin,—to put off the old man with his deeds,—to maintain a constant war with indwelling sin. According to this author, these are not moral duties, for our Saviour never practised them. There is at least one reason for our covenanting, which could not possibly take place with our Saviour; namely, our readiness to turn aside from God: and covenanting, when rightly set about, is a mean, through the Lord's blessing, for establishing us in the way of the Lord.

He says, Covenanting is not to be found in the catalogue of moral duties which Christ exhorted to the performance of. It is strange, if a surrendering ourselves to the Lord, and engaging to duty in the most solemn manner, whether by persons or nations,—be no way inculcated by our Saviour. There is one passage of our Saviour's sermon on the Mount, that deserves our author's and our consideration as to this point; Matth. v. 33. *Ye have heard that it hath been said by them of old time, Thou shalt not forswear thyself, but shalt perform unto the Lord thine oaths.* Our Saviour, in this sermon, explains and enforces the moral law; opens up its spirituality, and vindicates it from the corrupt glosses of the scribes and Pharisees. He comes here to explain and enforce the third commandment; as he had done before with respect to the sixth and seventh. It is evident, he mentions here what was said by them of old time,—in a way of approving it; as well as he does in verses 21. and 27.: though he mentions it in order to point out further the meaning of the commandment; to shew that it was not restricted to a forbidding of perjury, or

or false swearing,—but did also forbid all rash swearing, and swearing by the creatures. What our Saviour mentions as well said by them of old time, evidently takes in vows where the Lord is the party, and wherein a solemn oath is interposed; yea, the last part seems chiefly to have a respect to these, *Thou shalt perform to the Lord thine oaths*. Our Saviour then here adopts the doctrine taught in the Old Testament, as to religious oaths and vows,—and the performance of them; and teaches that such oaths and vows, while they were only bonds to moral duty, were in their nature moral,—and so not only belonging to the legal dispensation: though the duty of vowing the observance of ceremonial institutions no doubt ceased, when the ceremonial law was abrogated. If the Essayist shall alledge, that what follows in verse 34. *Swear not at all*, is meant by our Saviour as a contradiction to what was said by them of old time; then he turns Quaker,—and perhaps he may, rather than allow the morality of the duty of covenanting. It would have done our author's cause no harm, though he had wrote more softly than he does; when he says,—that to say covenanting is a moral duty, amounts to an alledging Christ was a sinner, and that he was not a perfect pattern to us.

After we have considered this author's arguments against the morality of the duty of national covenanting, it will not be improper next to see if he has overthrown the arguments which are brought forth for it by those of a contrary opinion from him. His essay to do this begins p. 12. “ They alledge they have a moral command for it, *Vow to Lord your God, and pay*, (Psal. lxxvi. 11.); but this is surely a great mistake:—This was a ceremonial command, and has only a reference to the law-church. A Jewish vow consisted in devoting a part of their worldly substance to the Lord, in shaving their heads, and performing some such bodily services. This is plain from Numb. xxx. 1.—16.” In answer to this, it may be observed,—that the vows we read of Numb. xxx. were such as were to be performed if made; but such as they were not obliged by the law to come under;—as appears by comparing with this place of scripture, Deut. xxiii. 21. 22. *When thou shalt vow a vow to the Lord thy God, thou shalt*
not

not slack to pay it.—But if thou shalt forbear to vow, it shall be no sin in thee. But in Psal. lxxvi. 11. such vows are spoken of as we are not only required to perform if made, but expressly required to make and take on; and the command is directed to all that are round about the Lord our God; so that this must be viewed as a moral command. If the Essayist's gloss upon this scripture were just, then we are not bound by this command, or any such in the Bible, to come under vows to the Lord in New Testament times any manner of way,—such as by Baptism, and partaking of the Lord's Supper; for his argument will conclude as much against these being enjoined, as covenanting. I shall cite Mr. Henry's words on the place: "Observe, the duty required of us all, all that are about him, that have any dependence upon him, or any occasion to approach to him; and who is there that has not? We are therefore every one of us commanded to do our homage to the King of kings, *Vow and pay*, i. e. Take an oath of allegiance to him, and make conscience of keeping it. Vow to be his, and pay what you vow. Bind yourselves with a bond to him (for that's the nature of a vow,) and then live up to the obligations you have laid upon yourselves." Will this author affirm the command Deut. vi. 13., repeated Chap. x. 20., to *swear* by the name of the Lord, which is commanded along with *fearing* and *serving* him, to be a ceremonial command?

Page 13. He mentions the third commandment as what we argue from; and says, "All that can be learned from this command is, that we ought to use the name of God on any occasion, but particularly in our immediate addresses to him, with due reverence and godly fear." It may be here noticed, that he makes no mention of the *first* commandment as what we argue from; though that requires us to acknowledge God as our God, to avouch the Lord to be our God: nor of our arguing from the second commandment, which requires the receiving of all God's ordinances; among which swearing by the name of God, and vowing unto him, are expressly mentioned in our Larger Catechism, and proven from scripture to be ordinances of divine institution. The third commandment also affords us an unanswerable argument for the morality of

of the duty; for it requires the holy and reverent use of God's name in swearing by it, as well as otherwise. There is no ground to think this author, though perhaps he assumes the character of a Presbyterian minister, pretending to appear for reformation too, pays any regard to our excellent standards,—whatever he may have once a day very solemnly profest. But I would direct those who have any regard for these standards, to read deliberately our Larger Catechism on the three first commandments, and compare the explication of them with the scriptures referred to; and then let them judge, if national covenanting be not enjoined in the moral law;—if from the moral law itself, as given forth by God, we be not furnished with an argument for the morality of the duty, that could never be invalidated by all the anti-covenanters that have ever yet appeared,—much less by the jargon of this trifling writer.

Downward in the same page, he says, “ They produce also various promises in confirmation of their point: But it is quite plain, that some of these (such as Jer. l. 4. 5.) were fulfilled under the Old Testament, when the church returned from Babylon.” That this promise had some begun accomplishment in the Jews return from Babylon, and the covenanting that took place after their return, is not denied: But it seems evident from the scope of the place, that it has ultimately a respect to New Testament times; and thus it has been viewed by orthodox divines.

His view of Isa. xix. 18. 21. is prodigiously absurd; and may satisfy any thinking person of the validity of the argument for covenanting in New Testament times, drawn from this place of scripture,—if such a strange shift must be taken to get it invalidated. His words are,—“ And as to the prophecy, Isa. xix. 18. it was literally fulfilled also before the commencement of Christianity. Five cities in the land of Egypt, one of which was called the city of the sun, actually learned the language of Canaan, viz. the Hebrew language; and swore to the Lord of Hosts, or took hold of the Sinai covenant, and so engaged to adhere to all its ordinances and institutions. Upon which an altar was erected to the Lord in the midst of the land of Egypt, and sacrifices offered there as at Jerusalem.”

"Jerusalem." It seems evident the Essayist had not been adverting to what he was doing, when he wrote this part of his Essay. After the erection of the tabernacle, even before the settlement of the public worship of God in Zion at Jerusalem, no altar was allowed for sacrifice but that which was before the tabernacle; as is plain from Josh. xxii. 29. And after the settlement of the public worship at Jerusalem, it was nothing less than idolatry to erect an altar for sacrifice any where else; except upon special direction from the Spirit of the Lord, as Elijah had in an extraordinary case,—when the matter was to be brought to the trial between him and the priests of Baal, who was God. This we see was a received principle among the Jews, John iv. 20.; That there was to be no temple for worship, nor altar for sacrifice, but at Jerusalem. Hence it is plain, if there was such a temple and altar in Egypt, as this author affirms from the authority of Josephus, they were idolatrous. And shall we make an idolatrous worship in Egypt, the accomplishment of a promise? What is the amount then of this part of this author's essay? It is an essay to make the great, the jealous God, a patron of idolatry †?

It may not be improper, as this scripture is so grossly perverted by some, to offer a short view of it. The words of the Spirit of God are, *In that day shall five cities in the land of Egypt speak the language of Canaan, and swear to the Lord of hosts:—And the Lord shall be known to Egypt, and the Egyptians shall know the Lord in that day, and shall do sacrifice and oblation; yea, they shall vow a vow unto the Lord, and perform it*, Isa. xix. 18. 21. We may observe, 1. The season of the accomplishment of the promise, is the New Testament day; it being called, *that day*, by way of eminency. It was usual with the prophets, thus to point out
New

† Whoever pleases to consult Josephus, *Antiquities* lib. xiii. chap. 6. will find that Josephus a Jew looked on Onias his building that temple in Egypt (which he pretended to justify from this prophecy of Isaiah) as an impious violation of the law: And admires the piety of Ptolemy and his Queen Cleopatra; who in their letter to Onias, wherein they grant him liberty to build this temple, yet discharge themselves of having any hand in this violation of the law, and cast the whole blame on Onias.

Wars of the Jews, lib. vii. chap. 30. The same author declares, that Onias built this temple out of a spleen he bore to the Jerusalem Jews that forced him away.

New Testament times, as Isa. xii. 1. Zechi. xii. 9. 10. xiii. 1. This appears also from the context; for it is a day when Gentiles shall be brought into a church state; when they shall know the Lord, worship and serve him, when the middle wall of partition between Jews and Gentiles shall be broken down; as it is a day in which the Lord will say, *Blessed be Egypt my people, and Assyria the work of my hands,* as well as *Israel mine inheritance*, verse 25. Though the Lord, by the prophet, speaks, in the first part of the chapter, of judgments coming on Egypt; yet it is very usual with the prophets, to make a transition from threatenings to promises, which were to be accomplished in New Testament days. 2. The objects of the promise are certainly Gentiles; for they are *five cities in the land of Egypt*, the inhabitants of these cities; and verse 21. *Egypt* in general is mentioned: the good work that is begun among a remnant, may, by the blessing of the Lord, spread through a nation. It is well observed by some, that *Egypt* here, and *Egypt* and *Assyria* downward in this chapter, are by a synecdoche put for the Gentiles of different nations. 3. The thing promised is, they *shall swear to the Lord of Hosts*; not only *by him*, but *to him* in a religious oath or covenant: we swear *by him*, in civil oaths; but in religious oaths, we swear *to the Lord of Hosts*, as being the party as well as the witness. And that it is to be thus understood, appears from verse 21. *They shall vow a vow to the Lord*. 'Tis evident then that it is here matter of promise,—that Gentiles shall, in New Testament times, not only take up a profession of Christ, submit to his ordinances, and take on his yoke; but that they shall bind themselves to the profession and obedience of Christ, by a solemn vow and religious oath or covenant.

But though the Essayist makes that worship which he says took place in Egypt before the commencement of Christianity, (which we have shewn to be idolatrous,) to be the accomplishment of this promise, in the body of his Essay; yet, it seems, he was in some doubt if this would take: and therefore he tries another method to get free of this argument, in a note at the foot of the page. His words are, "But if any still suppose, that this prophecy is
" to be fulfilled in gospel times, then it must be taken in a
" me-

“ metaphorical, and not in a literal sense; as all similar
 “ prophecies are. Consequently, the altar, the pillar, the
 “ language of Canaan, must also be metaphorical; and so
 “ swearing to the Lord must not be explained literally,
 “ but so as to refer to some duty which answers the same
 “ end with formal swearing,—such as baptism, the Lord’s
 “ supper,” &c. To this it is answered,—Though the lan-
 guage of Canaan, the altar, and sacrifice, are to be taken
 in a metaphorical sense; it will not follow, that *swearing*
to the Lord is not to be taken literally: more than it will
 follow, that because, chap. lvi. 7., there is mention of
 burnt-offerings, sacrifices and an altar, which are to be
 taken in a metaphorical sense, therefore prayer is not to be
 taken in a literal sense: for it is evident from the context
 there, that that promise looks to New Testament days.
 When any thing, in its own nature ceremonial, is spoken
 with respect to New Testament times, it is, no doubt, to
 be understood in a metaphorical sense: but when any thing,
 in its nature moral, is spoken of in a promise of the Old
 Testament, as to take place in New Testament times,—it is
 to be understood in a proper and literal sense. The altar
 and sacrifice were typical things, and we know what was
 typified by them. But pray, what was the antitype of
 swearing to the Lord of hosts, or that duty which comes
 into the place of it? Mr. Henry on the place says, “ They
 “ shall swear to the Lord of hosts; not only swear by him,
 “ giving him the honour of appealing to him, as all na-
 “ tions did to the gods they worshipped; but they shall,
 “ by a solemn oath and vow, devote themselves to his ho-
 “ nour, and bind themselves to his service:— they shall
 “ swear allegiance to him as their king; to Christ, to
 “ whom all judgment is committed.” Neither can swear-
 ing to the Lord of hosts here, be understood only of the
 solemn profession that is made in receiving baptism and the
 Lord’s supper: for, though no doubt an oath is implied in
 these,—yet the expressions here, of *swearing to the Lord of*
hosts, *vowing a vow to the Lord*, and elsewhere, of *subscrib-*
ing with the hand to the Lord, must refer to a formal, ex-
 plicite swearing by the great name of the Lord; or else we
 may wrest the scripture to any meaning we please. No
 words can be conceived more plain and express to the pur-
 pose,

pose, than those of the prophet. Besides, the Old Testament church had seals of the same covenant of grace, for substance the same with those under the New; yet to them they were called, on certain occasions, to superadd this solemn act of express swearing. Why then should it be pled, that no more is intended by these expressions, as they refer to New Testament days, than a partaking of the seals of the covenant; seeing it is evident, that these expressions meant something further in the days of the prophets?

In his note at the foot of the page, we have another strange sentiment of this author's. He says, "When any prophecy is restricted to a certain city or nation only, it is only to be accomplished in that city or nation.—We must, according to this rule, look for the accomplishment of this prophecy in Egypt only, and not in any other nation." The native tendency of this remark, is,—an essay to deprive himself and all others, of any benefit by or comfort from all such promises in the scriptures, as first and more immediately respected persons in another nation or age. If verses 18. 21. be restricted to Egypt only, so must verse 20., where there is a promise of *a Saviour and a great One to deliver them*; which is, without doubt, a promise of Christ. According to this author's view, Christ is a saviour and deliverer to the Egyptians only; and so he robs himself of any claim to this promise. For this is just as much restricted to that nation, as verse 18. is; Egypt's name being marked in, or prefixed to, that prophecy, (to use his own words) as it is to the other. To conclude our observations on this author's view of this scripture; his words here seem to make a pretty manifest contradiction to the words of the Spirit of God by the apostle, Rom. xv. 4. *Whatsoever things were written aforetime, were written for our learning.*

Page 15. He proceeds to give his gloss on another promise in the Old Testament, from which the friends of covenant-work argue. His words are, "Again, Isa. xlii. 1. 2. 3." (I suppose, he meant Isa. xlii. 3. 5.) "has evidently a respect to the manner in which individuals under the gospel shall lay hold on the covenant of grace. It does not say, that a nation shall say, We are the Lord's; but *One shall say, I am the Lord's.*—Every true Christian says, in his heart,

" in

"in his closet, and by his profession, *I am the Lord's*; in him have I righteousness and strength." The scripture referred to runs thus: *I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground; I will pour my Spirit upon thy seed, and my blessing upon thine offspring: and they shall spring up as among the grass, as willows by the water-courses. One shall say, I am the Lord's; and another shall call himself by the name of Jacob; and another shall subscribe with his hand unto the Lord; and surname himself by the name of Israel.* We may observe,

1. The thing promised here, is just what we plead for; a saying, *I am the Lord's*, and a *subscribing with the hand to the Lord*. What else is a people's taking hold of God's covenant of promise, and devoting themselves to the Lord in a covenant of duty, and subscribing the same? No doubt, this is to be said with the heart; but the Spirit of God teacheth, that we are to *confess with the mouth*, as well as *believe with the heart*, Rom. x. 10.: yea, both are pointed out as necessary; for as the one is said to be to *righteousness*, so the other is to *salvation*. This promise evidently respects a confession; for it is concerning what shall be *said*, what shall be *subscribed* with the hand. And that this confession is to be made with the solemnity of an oath, upon proper occasions, appears from this expression of *subscribing with the hand*; as it is well known to be usual to subscribe our oath, after we have sworn it: and it seems to be an allusion to that of soldiers subscribing the military oath, or subjects their oath of allegiance to their king. Moreover, that it is to be said in a way of swearing, is plain by comparing this with other places of scripture; as Isa. xix. 18. and xlv. 24. It is to no purpose to tell us, that it is only meant of individuals taken by themselves. Common sense dictates, that what is the duty of a person, is also incumbent upon a society in their social capacity,—with respect to such duties as are competent to them in that capacity. If a person may devote himself to the Lord, in a covenant of duty; why may not a congregation, or a nation that professes the Christian religion? Especially considering that it is promised, that *many nations shall be joined to the Lord in that day, and shall be his people*, Zech. ii. 11. And that at Antichrist's fall, *The kingdoms of this world*

should become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ, Rev. xi. 15. Besides, if this author acknowledges the unity of the church of Christ, he may consider, that the one here not only respects particular persons, but the one body; that the different members of it shall say so as with one mouth. The promise may be conceived in such terms also, that every one may claim the promise, as made to him.

2. That this promise respects New Testament times, appears from its connexion with the promise of the Spirit, in the plentiful effusion of his grace and influences, verse 3.; which properly belongs to New Testament days, Joel ii. 28. Acts ii. 17. 18. John vii. 39. This saying and subscribing is promised, as the fruit of that plentiful down-pouring of the Spirit.

3. It respects the Gentiles; for the promise looks particularly to the dry ground and parched wilderness, which agrees well to the barren Gentiles; and they are thus often represented in the Old Testament. Thus it appears, that this scripture affords a stronger argument for national covenanting in New Testament times, than the Essayist would have the world to believe.

He mentions no more promises in the Old Testament that we argue from; but it is no difficulty to point out more to him, though the above are sufficient to establish the point. Among various others, there is one that may be a little taken notice of here; Isa. xlv. 23. *I have sworn by myself, the word is gone out of my mouth in righteousness, and shall not return; that unto me every knee shall bow, every tongue shall swear.* Concerning which promise it may be observed, 1. That it belongs to the Gentiles particularly, and to New Testament times, when the Gentiles should be brought into a church state. The call, verse 22., is directed to *all the ends of the earth*; therefore the promise must respect all the ends of the earth,—wherein Jehovah solemnly engages by oath, that the call shall not be in vain. It appears also from the words of the promise, *every tongue shall swear*. 2. The thing promised is what we plead for, viz. swearing allegiance to Zion's King in a solemn oath and covenant; not only shall they swear *by him*, but *to him*.

But the Essayist will be ready to say, that when the apostle cites this scripture, Rom. xiv. 11. Phil. ii. 10. 11., he

he makes no mention of *swearing*; but turns it into *confessing*. But there is no weight in this exception; when we consider, that religious swearing being one main piece of religious worship, the prophet puts it for the whole of that worship to be performed to Christ; as Zech. viii. 21., prayer is put for the whole of religious worship. Now, what is the proper meaning of the various outward acts of religious worship? what is it done by them, particularly by this of religious swearing, but a making confession of Christ? There is nothing then follows, from the prophet's mentioning one act of worship for the whole, and the apostle's mentioning what is the proper meaning and design of this and other acts of worship, — that can weaken the argument. From the two places compared, the native consequence is, — that we are to confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, by swearing allegiance to him on proper occasions. — He may farther alledge, the apostle applies this to the day of judgment, Rom. xiv. 11.; therefore it cannot prove covenanting to be a moral duty. It is answered, This is a promise concerning Christ's dominion, — and therefore fitly applied to the day of judgment, when will take place the highest and most illustrious exercise of that dominion; but it cannot follow, that it respects not his dominion, and the acknowledgment thereof by his subjects, before the day of judgment. The context makes it evident, it is not to be restricted to this; as appears from the call, verse 22., and the matter of the oath, verse 24. — It will be further said, that *swearing* is to be understood as a metaphorical expression, as well as *bowing the knee* is. I answer, — According to the same way of reasoning, because, Phil. ii. 10., *Bowing the knee* is only a metaphorical expression; therefore *confessing that Jesus Christ is Lord*, verse 11., is a metaphorical expression too. Swearing being a proper act of religious worship, and no way of a ceremonial nature, it must be understood properly. — Finally, perhaps some will say, that, according to this view of the words, none are true believers but such as are formally covenanters. We answer, this will by no means follow. What follows is, that every true believer will confess Christ as he has opportunity: that as the worshippers of Christ shall surrender themselves to him, and be covenanters in heart;

heart; so, as the Lord gives opportunity, and clears up their way, he will bring forward formally and jointly to swear allegiance to him, and give themselves to him in a covenant of duty. When our adversaries explain this, and other such scriptures, of swearing by the true God in civil matters; they will not allow that it follows from their view, that every true Christian shall thus swear; as many such have never occasion to swear about any such matter all their days. But this will as much follow from their explication, as the other from ours.

Page 15. He goes on to consider our argument from example. The first example he mentions, as what we argue from, is the example of our ancestors in the two last centuries: as if we not only made that an argument for the morality of the duty, but looked on their example as the leading one. That we are for going out by the footsteps of the flock, according to Cant. i. 8., is what we are not ashamed to acknowledge: yet we never proposed the example of any man, or of any set of men since the canon of the scripture was compleated, abstractly from the scripture, and its agreeableness thereto, as an argument for this or any other duty. This is one of the vile calumnies that will be wiped off, when the mouth of them that speak lies shall be stopped.

“ The only example (he says) they produce from the “ New Testament, is found in 1 Cor. viii. 5.” (he surely means 2 Cor. viii. 5.) “ where it is recorded, that the *Macedonians first gave themselves to the Lord.* — Is there “ no other way by which men give themselves to the Lord “ but this? Do not men give themselves to the Lord at “ baptism, and when they receive the Lord’s supper.” The Essayist lays down our argument from this place of scripture, so as to conceal where a great part of its weight lies. The apostle’s words, 2 Cor. viii. 5, are, *And this they did, not as we hoped; but first gave their own selves to the Lord, and unto us by the will of God.* This place cannot be understood merely of a professed subjection to Christ in submitting to his ordinances, and particularly partaking of the seals of the covenant; for this could be no more than the apostles expected from a church, yea, without this the Macedonians could not have had the name of a church.

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But the apostle speaks of something they did, which was more than he and others were expecting. Nor can it be meant only (as some would have) of devoting a part of their substance to the use of the poor saints; for this is otherways, expressly spoken of in the context: and here, the manner in which they proceeded is set forth; first in order dedicating themselves to the Lord, and then their substance. Here surely is covenanting, as to the *matter* of it, in a church of the New Testament. But some will say, it is not here as to the *manner* of it, by swearing to the Lord in a formal covenant. We answer, that this is plain from other places of scripture. And it is strange that such as allow the warrantableness of an oath under the New Testament, in a matter of weight and controversy, and that it is a solemn act of religious worship; should deny it to be warrantable in a matter of such weight as God's eternal truth, and where the controversy is between God and Baal.

He mentions no more places of the New Testament that we argue from; whereby he would seem to insinuate, that there are no more places in the New Testament that we affirm give countenance to our principles on this head. But this is far from being the case. The reader may cast his eyes upon Matth. v. 33. touched at before; Rom. xii. 1. Rev. xi. 15. Besides, we that are friends to covenanting work in New Testament times, are of opinion, that Socinians and Anabaptists greatly err,—when they deny the Old Testament to continue to be a rule to the New Testament church; and we reckon that arguments brought from thence for any article of faith or matter of duty, are of the same authority with those brought from the New Testament. Though we acknowledge the Mosaic oeconomy is come to an end; yet we maintain, upon solid grounds, that the Old Testament, as to doctrine, continues a rule of faith and manners: which is proven by the learned *Turretine* in his system.

The Essayist argues, p. 16. “The apostles taught nothing
“but what they received from their Master, but nothing
“like this was given them by Christ; and hence they never
“injoin'd any such thing upon the churches, nor did
“any such thing themselves.” But that this duty is laid
down in the New Testament, appears from what hath been
said

said above; and might be shewn from these places that require Christians to stand fast in the faith, to quit them like men, and be strong, to confess Christ before men, to contend for the faith, to stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel. Christians are commanded, not only to resolve inwardly, each by himself, but to declare outwardly their sincere resolution to own the cause of God, and to be mutually assisting to one another in so doing; and that in opposition to all errors and immoralities. And to deny that an oath may be interposed in such an important weighty matter, for laying ties on themselves, and to give mutual security for one another's firmness in the common cause,—favour much of the delusion of the Quakers. There being no express precept for it in so many words in the New Testament, will never conclude against a moral duty; while the whole Bible is our rule. If this were the case,—then, by the same argument, other doctrines of our holy religion, which the opposers of covenanting work profess an adherence to, would fall to the ground.

Pages 15. 16. He says, "They affirm, moreover, that national covenanting under the law was a type, therefore it must be a christian duty also." For my part, I never, to my remembrance, heard or read any such assertion from a friend to covenanting work. The Essayist would have the world to believe them very stupid who befriend our covenants; which they would certainly be, if they looked on covenanting as a type of something to take place in the New Testament church, and yet maintained that the type was to be continued after the antitype was come. They affirm it to be a moral duty, and therefore a duty incumbent on the church under every dispensation.

Our only remaining argument, according to this author, p. 17.; is the example of the Jewish rulers., The strange principles he endeavours to establish with respect to covenanting among the Jews, fall properly under consideration—when we come to examine whether covenanting be a duty only in a political light.

We have now gone through his arguments against the morality of the duty of national covenanting; and considered

dered whether he has overthrown the arguments we use for it. The Essayist may be further informed, that we argue for covenanting from the principles of natural religion*, as well as from revelation. Does not the light of nature teach men, that as God is to be worshipped and served; so they ought to come under solemn obligations to serve him? That a person or people may solemnly bind themselves to keep that which is committed to their trust, and can there be a greater trust than religion? That any society may jointly swear in a lawful oath to promote the good of the society; and that each shall, to the utmost of his power, promote the common cause; and why may not the church and church-members do the same?

But as a further enlarging on the different arguments for the morality of the duty, would swell this performance beyond the present design; this part of it shall be shut up with a citation from a late pamphlet (which perhaps the author of the essay is not unacquainted with) intitled, *An historical Account of the Seceders*, p. 7: 8. "Nothing so
" much distinguished our ancestors, as their public cove-
" nanting with God. Divinely assured, that, in the days
" of Moses, Joshua, Aza, Joash, Josiah, and Nehemiah,
" the Hebrews had, with his approbation, thus dedicated
" themselves and seed to the Lord: Convinced, that pub-
" lic covenanting is no where, in the sacred page, repre-
" sented as a ceremonial service; and so must be equally
" lawful under the new dispensation, as under the old:
" Convinced, that it was expressly promised to take place
" under the gospel; and, with apostolic approbation; pro-
" bably was practised in the Macedonian church: Con-
" vinced,

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* The Essayist may consider, for making him ashamed, a very striking passage of Epictetus,--a famous Heathen philosopher in the days of Nero; which, in a literal translation, is as follows, viz,

" To God ye should give a solemn oath, such as the soldiers give to Cæsar.
" They indeed, induced by their wages, do swear, that the safety of Cæsar
" shall be dearer to them than all things: But, ye who are endued by God
" with so many and so great benefits, will not ye swear? Or, when ye have
" sworn, will ye not perform? And what should ye swear? That ye will al-
" ways obey his voice; that ye will never complain of him, that ye will ne-
" ver find fault with his dispensations; that ye will always, without reluc-
" tance, do and suffer whatever may be necessary." *Epict. lib. I. cap. xiv.*

"vinced, that if subjects, on proper occasions, may enter into a solemn association and bond, to promote the service, honour, and safety of their sovereign; the professed subjects of Jesus Christ, may, in a social manner, devote themselves to promote his interest and honour: if a number of purchasers at once may take out a charter for their property, wherein they constitute themselves and heirs, the vassals of a prince, duke, or lord; there can be nothing unreasonable, if a number of men take hold of the everlasting covenant, and God in it, for their God, and the God of their seed; and herein devote themselves and posterity to be his honourable vassals and servants: Convinced, that if one man may solemnly devote himself to his Maker; hundreds, nay thousands, may do so together: Convinced, that if one, or more, may in baptism surrender his seed to the Lord, a whole nation may surrender their posterity to him. When Moses, before his exit, assured the Hebrew nation, that their covenant obligation reached their posterity, as well as themselves; when God avenged on Saul, and the Hebrews, their breach of a covenant made with the Gibeonites by their fathers, and about 400 years before; why should any object against extending the obligation of lawful covenants to posterity? Always supposing such vows good in their matter, plain in their form, reasonable in their juncture, and taken in truth, judgment, and righteousness; our ancestors were convinced, the three first precepts of the moral law approved thereof. The first requires us to avouch the Lord to be our God; why may not a number do this together? The second enjoins our receiving, observing, and keeping pure and entire, the ordinances of God's worship; why may we not vow to be faithful to this trust, and to cleave to the Lord? Especially when the third requires us to swear by his name, and vow to the mighty God of Jacob."

We shall not weary the reader with observations on the other parts of the essay. Having in vain essayed to prove national covenanting to be no *moral* duty; the Essayist comes to observe, page 6., "Ceremonial it cannot be." The Essayist then, and the writer hereof, are agreed for once. The ceremonies of the Old Testament dispensation, were

were no doubt types and shadows of good things to come; but, for my part, I never could find out the substance of such a shadow, nor the antitype of such a type. And to be sure a shadow without a substance, a type without an antitype, is a mere imagination in a man's own brains.

The author having denied this duty a place among either *moral* or *ceremonial* duties, we must now consider where he places it; as he cannot get it denied to have been a duty, under the Old Testament dispensation. Accordingly, page 6., he says, "It remains then that it was *political*, binding only upon the kings and governors of the Jewish nation: No such command is indeed given in the judicial law, which regulated the policy of that nation; but every civil ruler is allowed by God to pursue such prudential measures as are necessary for the support of his government, and the establishment of the laws, according to the exigency of circumstances, provided these measures are not inconsistent with the word of God. In this view, the renewing of the Sinai covenant was a duty in a *political* light." Whatever be this author's opinion about swearing by the name of the Lord, it is taught in our Confession of Faith, (chap. xxii.) from the scripture, to be a part of religious worship; and by all orthodox divines that have wrote about it. And surely swearing in a religious oath and covenant, must, in a very special manner, be a solemn act of religious worship. Now, it seems strange, that it should have been even the duty of the Israelites to renew their covenant with God, by the performing of such a solemn act of religious worship, without any command from God,—either in the moral, ceremonial, or judicial law. It seems likewise a new principle, to cut off any acts of worship under the Old Testament dispensation from a place among the duties required either in the moral or ceremonial law, and give them a place among political duties. This is to find out a middle state for duties of worship, as the Papists have done for souls. It is a received principle among the orthodox, that though the means of worship depend upon God's positive precept, or be what is called moral-positive; yet the observance of these means of worship that God appoints, is what we are bound to by the law of nature, or

is naturally moral ; for it is naturally moral that God is to be worshipped, and worshipped by such means as he himself has appointed. Nature itself teaches this. In this view, while the ceremonial law was in force, the Jews were bound by the moral law to observe the ordinances of worship therein appointed ; and now under the New Testament, we are bound by the moral law to the observance of all the ordinances of New Testament worship. What then can be the meaning of acts of worship merely *political* ?

The Essayist allows covenanting to be warrantable under the New Testament, as well as under the Old, in a *political* light ? page 11., “ So then though a king now has no connexion with the church as a king, yet if the progress of morality, arts and sciences, &c. depend very much upon the knowledge of the christian religion ; may he not, even in a political view, see it proper to stand up and read the words of the covenant in the book of the laws of Jesus, and urge the people to adhere to it ? ” This author’s doctrine of covenanting being a political duty, favours rank of the Erastian heresy. If a king as a king may, by virtue of the civil authority with which he is invested, urge his people to enter into covenant with the Lord for reasons of state ; then as such he may urge them to the renewal of that covenant, when they have broken it : And consequently as such, and without the church, he may judge of religious matters, and take order for the reformation of religion and the settlement thereof. If this is not to assert the king’s supremacy in causes of religion, I know not what it is. This principle will never tally with the words of Christ, *My kingdom is not of this world*. It has been proven by such divines as have wrote against the Erastians, — that though the Christian magistrate has a power *circa sacra* (about holy things), yet he has no power *in sacris* (in holy things) ; that it belongs to the church in her judicatures to judge of religious matters, and the magistrate is to strengthen the churches hands by giving the civil sanction (so far as proper) to their determinations. This notion of covenanting being a political duty, favours also of the deistical opinions prevailing at this day ; while it makes a solemn religious duty, merely a scheme for promoting

moting political interests—arts and sciences. And thus the profession of religion is subordinated to political interests—arts and sciences, instead of their being subordinate to it.

In order to establish his wild notion, he says, page 7. “ I think it quite plain, that God never commanded Israel “ to return to their duty by swearing ; but this form was “ used by their governors on prudential considerations.” Page 19, “ Swearing to adhere to the Sinai covenant was “ never commanded by God.” In answer to this, it may be observed, —that swearing by the name of God is expressly commanded, along with fearing and serving the Lord ; after the Sinai transaction, Deut. vi. 13. *Thou shalt fear the Lord thy God, and serve him, and shalt swear by his name.* Chap. x. 20. *Thou shalt fear the Lord thy God ; him shalt thou serve, and to him shalt thou cleave, and swear by his name.* For my part, I see no way how it is possible for any man to prove, that this command is only meant of swearing by him in civil matters ; and that it does not include swearing religiously on proper occasions. It seems evident that Israel, every time they renewed their covenant with the Lord, were yielding obedience to this express commandment. The reader may consult Deut. xxix throughout ; particularly verses 1. 10. 11. 12. *These are the words of the covenant which the Lord commanded Moses to make with the children of Israel, in the land of Moab, besides the covenant which he made with them in Horeb. Ye stand this day all of you before the Lord your God ; your captains of your tribes, your elders, and your officers, with all the men of Israel, Your little ones, your wives, and thy stranger that is in thy camp, from the hewer of thy wood, unto the drawer of thy water : That thou shouldst enter into covenant with the Lord thy God, and into his oath, which the Lord thy God maketh with thee this day : and see if God never commanded Israel to renew this covenant by swearing.*

Moreover, it cannot be denied, that what Azariah the prophet commanded and encouraged Asa to do, in consequence of the Spirit of God coming upon him, was what God was commanding and encouraging him to, 2 Chron. xv. 1. 2. 7. *And the Spirit of God came upon Azariah the son of Oded. And he went out to meet Asa, and said unto him,*
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Hear ye me, Aſa, and all Judah and Benjamin. Verſe 7. Be ye ſtrong therefore, and let not your hands be weak: for your work ſhall be rewarded. Verſe 8. And when Aſa heard theſe words, and the prophecy of Oded the prophet, he took courage—. Verſe 12. *And they entered into a covenant to ſeek the Lord God of their fathers, with all their heart, and with all their ſoul. And that it was by ſwearing, appears from verſe 14. And they ſware unto the Lord with a loud voice.* Here then Judah renews their covenant by ſwearing; being commanded and encouraged to do ſo by a prophet, under the inſpiration of the Spirit of God. It is to be wiſhed this Eſſayiſt, before he publiſhed ſuch ſtuff to the world,—had paid ſome proper regard to the words of Chriſt, *Search the ſcriptures.*—But if Iſrael was not commanded by God to return to their duty by ſwearing, they were certainly chargeable with will-worſhip when they returned to it in this manner; and had no ſuitable answer to that queſtion, Who hath required theſe things at your hand? It is true, we have not a particular command as to every inſtance in which an oath may be neceſſary, binding us to ſwear; yet it is as true, that there is no inſtance wherein an oath is lawful and neceſſary, but falls under the general command of the moral law. But here is a ſwearing of a ſolemn religious oath, which the Eſſayiſt allows warrantable by the Jews; and yet denies it to be commanded, either in the moral, ceremonial, or judicial law: and which, page 19., he ſays, we have no warrant for under the goſpel; and yet we are left at liberty to do it. Strange doctrine! That we may perform a ſolemn act of worſhip which we have no warrant for.

But further to eſtabliſh his notion of it as a political duty, he affirms, page 8., “None preſumed to bring the
“people under an oath, but the civil governors of the
“nations; none of the prieſts or Levites ever undertook
“ſuch a taſk, nor did they ever get any command to do
“ſo.—Jehoiada indeed made a covenant between God and
“the people; but this he did in the character of a civil
“governor, juſt before he dropt the reins of govern-
“ment, and put them in the hands of Joaſh.” Page 18.
he repeats the ſame thing for ſubſtance, “The prieſts and
“Levites never intermeddled with their adminiſtration:”
and

and infers, "It is then quite unprecedented for our ministers to administer oaths to the people; which they have no warrant for, either in the law or the gospel. When they are empowered by the king, no doubt they may do it in the character of subjects, but not as ministers of the gospel." It is a question what may be the Essayist's meaning in these passages;—but the words will bear,—that it is unwarrantable for ministers of the gospel to administer any oath to people, but as the king or civil governor gives them authority; and that the priests and Levites of old administered no oath to the people. But, as the last is not fact, neither will the first hold. 'Tis alledged, the author of this Essay is one who pretends to be a minister of the gospel, not of the established church either: if any strife or scandal shall fall out in his congregation, to come to some issue with which an oath may be necessary, then he has no warrant to administer it; yea, the course of discipline must stop in every church, except the king authorize gospel ministers to take oaths,—and then they do it, not as ministers of the gospel, but as subjects of the civil ruler over them. This is giving much to the king indeed; and giving up with the power of the church, that Christ her alone King and Head has granted to her.

But perhaps our Essayist will say, he is taken short here; he meant not the taking of oaths in the management of causes that may come before church judicatories, but of the administration of public religious oaths. Let us see then if it be true, that the priests and Levites never intermeddled with the administration of such oaths. Ezra was undoubtedly a priest, and he did bring the people under an oath. But it will be said, he did this as a civil ruler. We answer, it will be hard to prove this: Was it not as a priest that he prayed, and confessed Israel's breaches of covenant, Ezra ix.? As Solomon, in his prayer at the dedication of the temple, is to be considered as acting as a prophet. And seeing Ezra acted as a priest, chap. ix., it cannot well be proven, that he assumed another character in what he did, chap. x. 5., in making Israel to swear. But this is not the only testimony against this author. The reader may cast his eyes upon Neh. ix.; where we find, verse 5. *Then the Levites, Jeshua and Kadmiel, Bani, Hashabniah,*

Jabniab, Sherebiah, Hodijah, Shebaniah, and Pethabiah; Jaid, Stand up and bless the Lord your God for ever and ever; and blessed be thy glorious name, which is exalted above all blessing and praise. Verse 6: Thou. even thou, art Lord alone, &c. They go on acknowledging the great things God had done for them; and confessing their many breaches of covenant; till they come to this conclusion, verse 38., *And because of all this, we make a sure covenant, and write it; and our princes, Levites, and priests seal unto it.* Here Levites are expressly mentioned by name; as employed in the work of this solemn day. These mentioned either prayed successively, says Henry; or, as some think, there were eight several congregations, at some distance from each other, and each had a Levite to preside in it: The Levites were here employed in the making of this covenant, or the administration of this oath; for that the covenant was made in the way of swearing, is clear from the sealing of it,—and from what is said, chap. x. 28. 29. There is no word here of Nehemiah, the Tirshatha or governor, administering this oath; but that he was the first that sealed it. We defy this author to prove, that the kings of Judah did any other way bring their subjects under the oath of God, in the renewing of their covenant with him, than by the priests or Levites administering the same: 2 Chron. xxiv. 30.—33. will never prove it; the king might be said to read the book of the covenant in the ears of them present, though the priests and Levites read it,—being called and encouraged thereto by their king. And though he himself read it, and stood in his place and made a covenant before the Lord, &c. there is no ground from any thing there recorded to conclude, that the king, and not the priests or Levites that were present, did administer the oath.

As to Jehoiada, 2 Kings xi. 17. 2 Chron. xxiii. 16., one may wonder how the Essayist could have the assurance to say, he made the covenant between God and the people—in the character of a civil governor. How does he prove, that ever Jehoiada assumed the character of a minister of state or civil governor? He was a priest, and probably the high-priest, or at least the suffragan to the high-priest; and by his marriage was allied to the royal family. He was

one that no doubt had much influence among the people; he had a deep hand in the revolution that then took place; he crowned and anointed Joash. But none of these things will prove that he had the reins of government in his hand, as civil governor of the nation. It was competent to him as a priest, to crown and anoint Joash; and any subject might have had as deep a hand in the revolution, if he had had the same opportunity, without having the reins of government in his hand as the people's civil ruler. Athaliah the usurper was still upon the throne, till Joash was crowned and anointed; and this was done before the covenant was made. How then Jehoiada acted in the making of this covenant as a civil ruler, or when he was at all a civil ruler with the reins of government in his hand, is more than can well be comprehended.—Thus it seems a manifest untruth, to say that priests and Levites had nothing to do with the administration of religious oaths in the Jewish church.

As to the season of covenanting among the Jews, he says, page 7., "As to the time necessary for the administration of this oath, we might reason *a priori*, that it was a time of defection from the Mosaic institutions." Page 18., repeating the same thing for substance, he infers, "We can only be called to renew our covenant, when we forsake the Christian scheme." He seems here to insinuate, that there is no need of covenanting among us at present. It is a question, what this author's views of the Christian scheme are; but it is clear he is no friend to reformation work;—else he could not but see an awful defection and apostacy from once-attained-to reformation; and that the work of God is in the greatest hazard, from various errors and sectaries. It is therefore high time for the friends of it, to join in a solemn association and engagement to cleave to the same: and while the covenants these lands are under to the most high God, are so run down, which are binding on the latest posterity; to declare that they desire, for their part, to maintain the claim to God as the covenanted God of these lands.

Page 8. "The king never composed the form of an oath different from the covenant given at Sinai, but he read the words of the covenant in the book of the law, 2 Chron. xxxiv. 30.—33." Page 18. "In these ages they had not
E " got

“ got the art of putting God’s law in their own words, but
 “ they judged that God’s law was most clear and easy to
 “ be understood in God’s words.—Accordingly, when the
 “ people were to declare their adherence to the law, they
 “ only adhered to the law as expressed in the words of
 “ divine inspiration. Whence it is plain, that since the
 “ gospel is as plain as the law, we have no warrant to
 “ compose a particular system of Christianity in our own
 “ words, and oblige people to adhere to it.” Pray, how
 does this author prove, that the Jews ay renewed their
 covenant with God—in a way of simply declaring that
 they adhered to the Sinai covenant? whoever reads Josh.
 xxiv. 2 Chron. xv. Neh. ix. and various other places of
 scripture, may see it plain,—that they renewed their cove-
 nant in a way and manner suited to their then circum-
 stances. To be sure all religious covenanting, when suit-
 ably set about, is nothing more than a solemn adhering to
 the word of God: but this is to be done in a way suited
 to the circumstances of the people that enter into such a
 covenant; namely, by a confession of breaches of covenant,
 in a land already under such engagements,—and answer-
 able engagement to duties; as was the case among the
 Jews of old.

But this is not all the Essayist is driving at here. At one
 blow he beats down (*i. e.* he essays to do so,) all confessi-
 ons of faith, or other tests of orthodoxy, that have been
 found necessary in the church. “ We have no warrant,”
 says he, “ to compose a particular system of Christianity
 “ in our own words, and oblige people to adhere to it.”
 It has been reckoned a proper way to guard against the
 breaking in of error, while every one will put his own gloss
 upon the scriptures,—to draw up articles of faith as con-
 tained therein; to be adhered to by the members of such
 a church. This is not to make confessions of faith, or
 other such tests of orthodoxy, the rule, or any part of the
 rule; but they are to be considered as explications of the
 rule. This is warranted from such texts of scripture as
 injoin our holding fast what we have, holding fast the
 form of sound words, &c. It is well observed by the au-
 thor of the pamphlet formerly cited, intitled, *An historical*
Account of the Seceders, &c. p. 68. “ They, viz. the Se-
 “ ceders,

ceders, believe, few deny confessions of faith, for subordinate standards, but in order to vent some erroneous dream."—As this point has been handled by others, we shall only further observe, that if it be unwarrantable to draw up from the scriptures confessions of faith, or other such subordinate standards, and to desire an adherence to them as a test of orthodoxy; there can be no such thing as a keeping out from either ministerial or Christian communion, the grossest heretic that acknowledges the Bible: neither can there be a separation from any church, however corrupt, that professes to own the same. For they all affirm the agreeableness of their principles to the Bible, and will be ready to declare that they adhere to it. And thus a door is opened to Latitudinarianism in its greatest extent; a thing that seems to suit well with this generation, and with this author among others.

Page 20. The Essayist advances, by the bye, another very strange doctrine. He makes the Spirit's secret work of regeneration upon the soul, or internal grace, the ground and foundation of visible church-membership. His words are, "While they," (*viz.* the apostles,) "preached the gospel, the Spirit wrote God's law in the heart of the hearers; and put it into their inward parts: thus they entered into the Zion covenant; as thus, God was to them a God, and they were to him a people. Upon this they were admitted into the church by baptism, wherein they were engaged to be the Lord's." The absurdity of this notion has been shown, by such as have wrote against the Independants. As it lies out of the way of what we had in view at undertaking the writing of these observations, we do not enter on this point; but only mention it, to shew, that the author of this Essay, whatever he may profess to the contrary, is no Presbyterian; and that he is an avowed enemy of the doctrine taught in our standards from the word of God, not with respect to covenanting only; for it is there taught, that baptism is to be administered to such as profess their faith in Christ and obedience to him, and to the infants of such as are members of the visible church. But it is plain, that many make such a profession, as Simon Magus did, who have not internal grace.

What he says about the modern *Bond*, shall not be insisted upon; as neither is this the point properly before us. Page 21., He says, "As to the modern bond, experience shews even the covenanters themselves, that it has been attended with no good consequence." He should have confined this to the experience of such covenanters as the supposed author of this essay; who venture upon the matter to say, Let us break God's bands asunder, and cast his cords from us. Further, he cries out, "It naturally tends to raise in its votaries a spirit of pride and self-conceit." We answer, It has this tendency no other way, than as the corruption of man's nature may abuse it; as it does any duty or ordinance God has appointed in his word. Because man's corruption takes occasion to work, from that which is good, is it therefore to be laid aside? The notion which, according to this author, the modern bond tends to raise in the covenanters of themselves and others, "is productive of bigotry." It is a question what the Essayist means by bigotry. He gives great ground to suspect, that steadfastness in the faith, and holding fast our profession—is bigotry in his reckoning. The true notion of bigotry is, a fond and obstinate adhering to a man's own opinions and humours. I confess I never have seen an author give a greater display of self-conceit and bigotry, than the Essayist has done through this performance. But this is not owing to the modern bond, which, it is said, he has entered into; but to his dealing falsely therein, and God, in a way of righteous judgment, giving him up to walk in his own counsels.

Finally, as to the modern bond, he says, "Whatever tends to cherish love, joy, peace, long-suffering, &c. we may be sure is of Christ's institution; whereas every thing that has the opposite tendency, is only an engine of cunning leaders, for raising a character of peculiar sanctity among the people, or for promoting their secular interests." Covenanting, when rightly set about, has no other way an opposite tendency to love, peace, &c., than Christ's coming into the world had an opposite tendency to peace, Mat. x. 34. 35. Luke xii. 51.: And no other way has it a tendency to raise division, than Christ's coming had to send fire on the earth, and set men

at variance. It has been ordinarily the case, in the different periods of the church,—that after an essay at reformation work, errors and divisions have broke forth: in which God has had a holy hand, to try professors; and Satan a wicked hand, to see and bring a reproach upon the Lord's work. And the devil has never wanted instruments, in this case, to plead his cause; by charging these evils the Lord's work may be the occasion of, but not the cause, upon the work itself. This author joins issue with these of old, who charged the apostles, on account of their doctrine, as turning the world upside down: with the Pagans; who charged all the evils that took place, upon the Christians and their religion: and with the Papists; who have considered all the divisions and animosities among Protestants, as flowing from their separating from them, and as evidences of its being sinful. But this is another of this author's new principles; that the goodness or badness of a cause is to be judged of, from those things that it may be the occasion of.

Thus the great lines of this essay have been a little animadverted upon; which is all we think necessary: And so we shall come to a conclusion.

Upon the whole then, it is matter of lamentation,—that there is such a speat of opposition to our solemn covenants, and to covenanting work, at this day: And that this prevails, not only among open enemies to reformation, but among some that profess to be friends to Christ's interests. The length that some have come in opposing covenanting work at this juncture, some who formerly seemed hearty in espousing a testimony for a covenanted work of reformation, and some of whom joined in covenanting work themselves,—is very awful; and a clear evidence they are off the footing they were on, before the breach that took place among Seceders, whatever they may pretend to the contrary. It is openly enough said, this essay comes from one of them; and things are talked that, if true, look like sure evidences of the truth of the report. It will be a further evidence to the world where they are going, if they take no step to find out whether its author be among them, or if the reputed be the true author; and

and to declare their abhorrence of such principles as he has vented in this performance. The Essayist and others may consider the words of the Spirit of God by Solomon, Prov. xx. 25. *It is a snare to the man who devoureth that which is holy: and after vows to make enquiry.* May the Lord return and revive his work, by pouring the Spirit upon us from on high. May no weapon formed against Zion prosper; and every tongue that riseth against her in judgment, may she condemn.

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